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SHORT
OCCASIONAL POEMS.

BY

THE REV. J. E. BODE, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "BALLADS FROM HERODOTUS."

LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, LONGMANS, & ROBERTS.

1858.

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PREFACE.

THE title of this little volume perhaps sufficiently indicates its character. I may however be allowed to say that its contents have been selected, as the most worthy of attention, out of a much larger number of similar compositions, which have come into existence during the last twenty-three years, as the occasion occurred, or the phase of feeling or thought which they attempt to embody. It would be easy to add reasons (satisfactory to myself) both for my thinking them worthy of publication, and for my venturing to give them the name of "Short Poems," rather than "Verses," at the same time that I am fully, perhaps painfully, aware of the limits beyond which they cannot, and do not, aspire. But I have thought it better not to do so. Those who find anything to like in these pages, will not need any such apologies; while those who think them unworthy of notice, or any notice beyond a passing sneer, assuredly would not heed them.

Westwell Rectory,
December 17th, 1857.

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POEMS.



ON THE ST. CATHERINE OF RAPHAEL.

(In the National Gallery.)

OH ! painter of the godlike mind !
— Strength, softness, purity, combined ;
Whence didst thou draw the matchless grace
In yonder maid's angelic face ?
Say, did in dreams some vision bright
Steal o'er thee in the dead of night,
With mien thus soft, and eyes revealing
A more than human sanctity of feeling ?
Or was it but an earthly form,
With natural feelings pure and warm,
Passed from thy eyes into thy mind,
And thence came forth ? but how refined !
How tinged by thee with influence new,
And with that heaven-imparted hue,
Which separates thy art's creations rare
From all that others paint, however bright and fair !

Bent upon heaven, her upturned eye
Beholds her Saviour in the sky ;

And to the welcome of His love
In trancèd sweetness soars above.
'Tis this has given that look serene,
And that all-untroubled mien,
Though the hour of death is near ;
Still her glance is high and clear.
What now to her the torturing doom ?
Her body is on earth ; her heart beyond the tomb !

With faintest curve her lip alone
Betrays the pang she would not own ;
And, though her thoughts on high may be,
She pays that tribute still to frail humanity.

Calmly she stands. One delicate hand and fair
Leans, as if half unconscious where,
On the storied wheel of death —
Where she soon must yield her breath ;
And in heaven a saint shall shine,
Scarcely changed — and yet, divine !

THE OLD AND NEW YEAR.

HARK! hear ye not the solemn moan
 Of the distant-pealing bell,
 As it tolls in sad and measured tone
 The parting year's farewell?
 The parting year! — a simple sound —
 And yet methinks it ne'er comes round,
 But every heart must higher swell,
 Responsive to the pealing bell:
 For many a hope, and many a fear
 Has gone with thee, thou parting year!

Where are the hopes, so bright and gay,
 That gladdened then life's onward way?
 Where are the flowers, so fresh and fair,
 That fancy painted blooming there?
 Alas! those gladsome hopes are fled,
 Those flowers are withered all and dead;
 And many a visionary scheme
 Has vanished like an airy dream!

Hark! I hear an altered measure,
 Notes that tell of joy and pleasure:
 'Tis the old year lulled to sleep —
 Cease, oh cease, its loss to weep!

Cease to heave a useless sigh
O'er joys for ever now gone by!
Thou canst not call those moments back,
Nor tread again that vanished track :
Then forward let thy glance be cast,
Not linger hopeless on the past!
But wipe away the falling tear,
And hail with smiles the new-born year!

May its joys be as bright as the summer flowers!
And its griefs like the early April showers,
That obscure for awhile the sun's bright ray,
But in radiance and beauty soon vanish away!

ON THE SAME.

TOLL the bell ! a friend is parting,
 Ne'er again to glad our sight ;
 From each eye a tear is starting,
 As we say "Farewell" to-night.
 Linked with many a joy and sorrow,
 Many a smile and many a tear ;
 When we wake again to-morrow,
 Thou wilt be no longer here !
 Yet with thee shall memory linger,
 Oft recall each vanished scene ;
 Pointing with her magic finger
 To each spot where joy has been.
 Toll the bell ! — a friend has parted,
 Ne'er again to glad our eye ; —
 E'en the smile of the light-hearted
 Yields a moment to a sigh.

Peal the bell ! a friend advancing
 Comes with blithe and joyous air ;
 Mirth is from his bright eye glancing,
 Mirth that we ere long shall share.
 Haste ! to greet his glad arrival,
 Let a merry peal be rung !
 Sorrow's knell, and joy's revival,
 Are upon the stranger's tongue !

Hope, to meet him gaily flying,
Welcomes him with gladsome cheer —
Yet fond memory still is sighing
O'er the late-departed year.*

* I venture to remark (at the risk of provoking a sneer), that these and the foregoing lines were written many years ago, before I had seen Mr. Tennyson's "Death of the Old Year."

THE FOUNTAIN.

(Suggested by a spring under a rustic canopy in the grounds of
Redleaf, near Penshurst.)

OH! Fountain, "more than crystal clear!"
 Let me, while I linger here,
 Strive thy freshness to repay
 With a tributary lay.
 Though my verse unworthy be
 Of thy sparkling purity,
 Gratitude, that prompts the strain,
 Will not let it flow in vain.
 Not in vain — if it impart
 Kindred freshness to my heart!

All unstayed thy gushing flow
 'Mid the summer's noonday glow.
 Though the sun, with burning beam,
 Revel in the neighbouring stream;
 And beneath his parching power
 Fades the grass, and droops the flower;
 Yet he hath not leave to rest
 On thy pure and virgin breast;
 Nor in thy mirror clear to gaze
 On his bright reflected rays.
 'Neath thy canopy reclining,
 Little reck'st thou of his shining!

Far from every public way,
Few the feet that hither stray !
Yet the birds, that nestle near,
Fearlessly alighting here,
Standing on thy stony brink,
Bend their heads in thee to drink,
Or their playful wings to lave
In thy cool transparent wave ;
And in praise of thee prolong
Sweetest notes of grateful song !

Thus, amid the world's hot glare,
Christian souls, of virtue rare,
Safe beneath the sheltering roof
Of religion, tempest-proof,
And from each tainting influence free,
In their pure simplicity,
Fear not passion's stormy power,
Court not pleasure's sunshine hour ;
Clear like thee, and fresh and bright,
Shrinking from the vulgar sight,
Scarce revealing where they 'bide,
Save that, as they onward glide,
Their good deeds with music sweet
Cheer their heaven-aspiring feet,
And in gentlest accents tell
Kindred spirits where they dwell.

And, though all unseen they be,
Save by fancy's vision free,
Angel-visitants, I ween,
Oft above them fondly lean,

Listening to the whispered tone
Of a music like their own.

Ever, as they steal along,
Sounds their sweet unconscious song ;
Wooring all to turn, and see
Whence that peaceful harmony.

Thus upon my listening ear
Fall thy murmurs, soft and clear,
With a sweetly-soothing sound,
Speaking peace to all around ;
And my parting feet detain ;
While my verse, though all in vain,
Strives of thee to learn the art
To charm the ear, and soothe the heart.

APRIL FOOLS.*

"SWEET is the sunshine after showers," —
 'T is somewhat old, the strain !
 And sounds like mockery, too, to flowers
 That ne'er look bright again.
 And some, when once the hail-storms keen
 Come pelting on the bed,
 Though kindly nursed, are never seen
 To raise their battered head.
 And some proportion to the hail,
 Methinks, the rays must keep,
 Or smiles at length may chance to fail
 In eyes that always weep.
 Sunshine and showers are sweet in youth :
 At least, so poets say ;
 But jaded souls, care-cold, in sooth
 Affect a steadier ray.
 For, ah ! the warmth of heart, that dries
 The showers that sudden fall,
 And brightens up the tear-dimmed eyes —
 Has vanished, past recall !
 Yet still, in spite of all we learn
 In life's heart-withering schools,

* These lines, and "A Dirge and its Answer," appeared in
 "Fraser's Magazine."

(*God* help us! — *man* is somewhat stern —)

We still are "April Fools."

For still we hope, 'mid noonday showers,

A sun-bright afternoon ;

And dream, 'mid frosts, of spring's warm flowers,

And evening walks in June.

A COTSWOLD SUNSET.*

OH! with what glory dost thou feast our eyes,
 Great Painter of the skies!
 When, wandering homeward, as the sun descends,
 O'er downs uncheered by friends,
 (Haply with heart half-murmuring at the spot
 Where Heaven has cast our lot)
 Sudden we turn, and with arrested gaze
 Drink in the sunset blaze,
 After short pause rekindled yet more bright
 With last farewells of light;
 And from the earthly prospect, cold and bare,
 Fly to thy pictures there.
 Tint upon tint! they mock, with natural streaks,
 Art's wildest dreamiest freaks,
 Blending our old delight with rapture strange
 Of unexhausted change.
 Crimson and blue, and, crimson seas between,
 Isles of enchanted green;
 And 'mid dark purple hills' encircling fold
 Bright lakes of gleaming gold:
 And, flashing now, now softly floating through
 Purple and green and blue,

* These lines, and "Stanzas suggested by a Confirmation," appeared in the "Guardian."

A roseate flush, sister to those that glow
On Alpine peaks of snow.
Blest be Thy poet hand ! and blest, I say,
The pause I made to-day ;
Which to my heart, too " wrapt in earth's annoy,"
Brought back the thrill of joy,
That erst, dear Oxford, round thy favoured town,
As autumn suns went down,
Led me with hastier feet to seek the ridge,
Or well-remembered Bridge,
Where, in the sunset glow, the " tall trees " stand
With towers on the right hand,
And, 'mid the darkening stems, the last faint beam
Sinks in the glimmering stream.

THE CLOSE OF THE SUMMER.

(Written in dejection.)

THE summer hours, in these sweet bowers,
Are waning to a close ;
'T was but to-day, on yonder spray,
I plucked the latest rose.
On branch and bough, the foliage now
Is dyed a duller green ;
The joyousness of nature's dress
Has vanished from the scene.
And every day shall sweep away
Some charm or beauty left ;
Each chiller morn the fields forlorn
Shall feel themselves bereft.
E'en thus, I know, your course must flow
For me, life's coming years !
At every stage of added age
The path more dark appears.
Hour after hour, some fancied flower
Is withered on its stem ;
And droppeth down, from hope's gay crown,
Day after day, a gem.
The meteor light, that glimmered bright
Upon life's opening way,

(When life was new, I deemed it true)
Has passed in mist away.
The sounds of mirth, throughout the earth,
That youth is wont to hear,
Have lost — how soon! — their gladsome tune
Unto my altered ear.
Nor know I aught the realms of thought
Can now to me supply,
Save wiser themes than youth's gay dreams,
That I may learn to die.
For life to me has ceased to be
A garden stored with flowers :
That season gay has passed away
Like summer from the bowers.

STANZAS WRITTEN AT GUY'S CLIFF, NEAR
LEAMINGTON.

I.

WHERE 'neath yon cliffs, of old
Sir Guy's monastic hold,
Winds, 'mid embowering trees, the widening Avon,
On a pale April night,
I watched the sunbeams bright
'Neath dark clouds sinking towards their western haven.

II.

It was the day of rest,
Of all the seven the best ;
The busy spirit of care awhile was sleeping ;
A calm, as of the day,
On all the landscape lay,
As if the grateful earth her sabbath feast were keeping.

III.

The wheel of yonder mill
Is motionless and still,
No more the starry spray around it dashing ;
Beneath, the waters flow
In peaceful course and glow ;
Nor sound is heard, save a low gentle plashing.

IV.

The tumult and the roar
Burst on the ear no more,
The tortured water's voice of indignation ;
Ceased is that angry strife,
And to its natural life
The stream returns with tranquil exultation.

V.

The water knows not age —
Upon yon crystal page
The stir of yesterday has left no token ;
So calm the river's breast,
That you might deem its rest,
Its peaceful rest, had never yet been broken.

VI.

Would it were so with life !
Oh ! that the feverish strife,
That racks the mind's repose with angry riot,
Would thus subside again,
And leave no trace of pain,
No foam to tell of yesterday's unquiet !

VII.

But, when the wheel of care
Has once been busy there,
And love or hate has stirred the silent river,
The waters of the soul
No longer brook control,
But boil, and fret, and struggle on for ever !

VIII.

And though with wisdom's force
You check their headlong course,
Each passionate throb with gentle hand assuaging ;
A murmur, and a swell,
Shall yet remain, to tell
How wild the storm has been, how hard to curb its raging !

A WEDDING BALLAD.

I.

WITHIN the old Cathedral walls a bridal train is met ;
 And many a mingled glance is there, of pleasure and regret ;
 While blushing at the altar stands, her chosen by her side,
 To pledge th' irrevocable vow, that young and lovely bride.

II.

Oh ! gaze but for a moment, for, methinks, you soon may trace,
 The pledge of future happy years in her soft yet thoughtful face ;
 And if a tear perchance may dim the brightness of her eye,
 A tear for old familiar things — that tear will soon be dry !

III.

And who unmoved could quit the scene of childhood's joyous hours,
 Where kindred hands have vied to strew her early path with flowers ?
 And her, beneath whose watchful love those happy years have flown,
 And that fair sister bud ; that now must bloom awhile alone ?

IV.

Not hers the look that beauty wears of early conquest vain,
 That loves to weave for every heart a momentary chain ;
 But true affection's glance that speaks, in tones devoid of art,
 The gentle thoughts, and blissful hopes, of a young and happy heart.

V.

And now the holy words are said, and pledged the solemn vow ;
 And she must quit her much-loved home — she is thine for ever now —
 And she must know another name, and bless another hearth
 With her gentle voice, and graceful mien, and her smile of quiet mirth.

VI.

But thou, on whom her willing hand her virgin heart bestows,
Who from its own familiar bower hast borne this budding rose,
Oh ! guard it faithfully and well, nor e'er forget the hour
Which gave to grace thy favoured home that bright and lovely flower !

VII.

Forget not, that for thee she leaves her childhood's happy home,
Through many a new and chequered scene of life with thee to roam ;
The haunts of youth's unclouded hours, from every sorrow free,
And many a dear domestic tie — she has left them all for thee !

VIII.

I need not speak — full well I know that thou wilt aye repay
The glance of fond confiding love that met thy gaze to day ;
That memory's voice will oft recall the sweet yet solemn tone
With which she spoke the blissful words that made her all thy own.

IX.

Yet, though the future seem of nought but joy and hope to tell,
We lingering still regret to speak that parting word 'Farewell,'
And pray that, when again we meet, we may greet thee, e'en as now,
With the smile of happiness and love on thy fair and cloudless brow !

X.

And thou, methinks, wilt not disdain, e'en on this happy day,
The gift that early friendship brings, my tributary lay ;
And though all unadorned the song, and harsh the notes may be,
They yet, perchance, may hope to win a favouring smile from thee.

“ALL THINGS CONTINUE AS THEY WERE FROM
THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION.”

TIME's silent car rolls on — and all the while
 It scarcely seems that we have travelled a mile,
 Though the last stage is nearly o'er, and we
 Stand on the borders of Eternity.
 For the same flowers are on the right hand growing, }
 And the same river on the left is flowing, }
 As when we started e'en at the cock-crowing.
 Yon village church, that 'mid the trees is set,
 Not quite remembered, seems familiar yet :
 Such in some earlier hour I must have seen,—
 I know not if the leaves are quite as green.
 Thus, while the road draws nearer to its close,
 And nearer to the sea the river flows,
 We gaze around in search of something new ;—
 But the same objects seem to meet our view.
 There is no change in aught before our eye ;
 The self-same dust beneath the self-same sky — }
 The one not much less blue, the other not more dry. }
 Still the sun shines into the same dark nook ;
 Flows to the stream the same auxiliar brook ;
 The fields retain their wonted shape ; and still
 The valley sleeps beneath the accustomed hill.

And many a scattered roof around we trace ;
Each a familiar form, set in a well-known place.
There is no difference — all things seem to tell
We have been here before, and know the country well.

We see no difference — for we do not look
Into our heart, that melancholy book,
To trace the records, that we there *might* see,
Of changes rung on time's monotony.
There all is not the same — full many a line,
Impress and token of the hand Divine,
Is now effaced or blurred : and many a spot
Is there, which in those earlier days was not.
And when around we look so listlessly,
Is all indeed the same ? or may it be
Our shortening sight, our failing memory ? }
This tells no tale of what has pass'd away,
The unkept promise of our earlier day :
That cannot now discern the distant coast,
Where the dull river in the sea is lost,
Or mark the road delivering up its freight
At the Eternal City's ne'er-reopening gate.

THE WITHERED TREE.

“ My limbs were withered all and bare,
My pride of foliage gone ;
I stood amid that garden fair,
Hopeless, and worn, and lone.

“ All sadly to the scornful breeze
My arms I wont to fling,
Among the cheerful flowers and trees
The only mournful thing.

“ Two maidens saw my woeful case,
And soon their fancy brought
Inventive pity, to replace
The wreck that fate had wrought.

“ And lo ! evoked by love and them
My verdure to renew,
The rose around my leafless stem
Her graceful clusters threw.

“ And next, the hollows grim to hide
Which time in me had made,
The gay geranium’s scarlet pride
They summoned to their aid.

“ And now, in borrowed foliage drest,
I stand all fair to view.
I know not which I love the best,
My old leaves or my new !

“ Or, if at times, in Spring’s glad hours,
I mourn my barren stem ;
I glance on my adopted flowers,
And am consoled in them.

“ Then thanks be to each gentle friend
Who bade me live anew ;
The heavens to them their blessings send
In showers of freshest dew !

“ Theirs be to see life’s choicest flowers
Along their pathway strown ;
Theirs be to pass unclouded hours,
For this that they have done !”

E’en thus, when all is dark around,
And earth’s gay garden bare,
Some gentle voice may yet be found
To bid us not despair.

E’en thus the heart, whose hopes are wrecked,
Droop though it may awhile,
May yet by love with flowers be decked,
And wear a pensive smile.

A DIRGE AND ITS ANSWER.

I.

THE tints of the summer are fading fast,
And the sere leaves are falling with every blast;
And I think, at the close of each shortening day,
That another bright summer has pass'd away!

II.

It has past, like the rest, with its hopes and its fears,
Now brightened by smiles, now bedimmed by tears :
It has past, like the rest, with its pleasure and pain —
And, like them, it must never return again!

III.

These fast-falling leaves, and these withering flowers,
Are an emblem of man and his fleeting hours ;
For he basks for awhile in the sun's bright ray —
And the summer of life has pass'd away!

IV.

And the autumn of life is chill and drear,
When like leaves in the greenwood our hopes appear,
As they droop one by one from the withering spray —
And the autumn of life has pass'd away!

V.

And the winter of life is sad and cold,
When the feelings are dull, and the heart grown old,
And we long for the rest that the weary shall have
In the silence and gloom of the passionless grave.

VI.

But the grass of the grave can new flowerets send forth ;
And the soul of the just has a refuge of worth ;
And the spring of eternity blossoms for aye,
And its leaves never fade, nor its garlands decay !

VII.

Though the sun never shines in those regions so bright,
Yet the Lamb that was slain is their shadowless light ;
And the pavement of sapphires can never be dim,
For 'tis bright with the radiance reflected from Him.

VIII.

Unfading the glories, unsated the heart,
The one never flags, nor the other depart ;
And the eye never tires, though unbounded the view ;
And the joys, though unchanging, for ever are new !

IX.

Then muse on the emblems of earthly decay,
Yet trace 'mid the darkness a promise of day ;
And hear, 'mid the rustling of sere leaves and flowers,
The harps of the angels in amaranth bowers !

THE CHILD'S COMPLAINT TO THE NEW YEAR.

"THE year has come with snow and sleet ;

How desolate and drear !

I thought the sun was sure to greet

The beautiful New Year.

The Old Year he went out in rain,

As if he meant to say

'You ne'er will see my face again ;

Weep ere I pass away !'

But the New Year should have come with sun,

To kindle gladsome cheer —

Oh ! why hast thou with snow begun,

Thou comfortless New Year ? "

"Oh ! thou who murmurest at the snow

That strews my path with white,

Come ! listen to me while I show

Thou dost not judge aright.

No flower looks gaily from the earth,

No green leaf from the tree ;

To greet my birth no smile of mirth

On Nature's face I see.

Not yet from out her wintry prison,

The earth so cold and bare,

The bright-eyed crocus hath arisen,

And trimmed her golden hair.

30 THE CHILD'S COMPLAINT TO THE NEW YEAR.

The snowdrop too, whose flowers for me
Had been a fitting wreath ;
For I am young and pure as she,—
Still lingers underneath.
The violet, through her veil of green,
Scarce spied by passer by,
Like one whose love would not be seen,
To greet me is too shy.
For this, because the earth is dead
And I am bright and gay,
This carpet fair of snow I spread
Along my early way.
And thou, who dost my coming greet,
With young and happy voice,
So read aright my garb of white,
That thou may'st still rejoice !
That, when thou seest thy latest year,
Upon thee may be found
A robe of innocence as clear
As now lies on the ground !”

STANZAS SUGGESTED BY A CONFIRMATION.

I.

OH ! ye, who choose to-day
 Your Saviour's narrow way,
 Through the straight gate entering serene and bold,
 Hope not at once to feel
 Soft airs around you steal,
 Hope not for summer's warmth 'mid spring's young cold !

II.

Hope not with love to glow.
 Hope not zeal's gushing flow,
 No sudden burst of joy, or sweet surprise ;
 Hope not with raptured ear
 Heaven's strains at once to hear,
 Nor with blest visions to glad entrancèd eyes !

III.

Hope not at once to find
 Earth's clinging chains unwind,
 Leaving your heart to God entirely free ;
 Too much of natural sin,
 Must linger still within,
 Too much of acted sin engrained may be.

IV.

Not all unstained and white
 In God's unerring sight
 The robes Baptismal that again ye wear ;
 E'en partial human eye
 Some spots can there espy,
 Traces of earthly guilt, or earth's low care.

V.

Hast thou, since first thy soul
 Knew God and law's control,
 Bowed to that holy yoke thy constant neck ?
 Nursing, in humble mood,
 Each impulse pure and good
 Sent from Heaven's throne thy wandering will to check.

VI.

Or hast thou manned thy heart,
 Slighting the better part,
 Firmly to hold thy own irregular way ?
 Coolly to take thy fill
 Of pleasure, good or ill,
 As one who recked not of the Spirit's sway ?

VII.

Ransack the records sad
 Of passions wild and bad,
 That in thy heart have left their mark unclean !
 In spite of shame and pride,
 Still setting side by side
 All that thou art with what thou might'st have been.

VIII.

Therefore, with trembling breath,
 As yet in sight of death,
 Though from his icy grasp by Christ set free,
 Pray at each step for aid,
 Like one to fall afraid
 Save when His holy arm thy stay may be !

IX.

Yet keep thy high intent !
 Heavenward thy glance be bent,
 On the bright towers thou yet may'st hope to win !
 Twice made a child of grace,
 Set thou thy altered face
 Ne'er to look back on cherished haunts of sin.

X.

Think not thy race is run !
 Hope not till set of sun
 At Jesus' feet to lay thy armour down ;
 Where, for the saints secure,
 Who to the end endure,
 Gleams on the tree of life each deathless crown !

XI.

Yet let those visions dear,
 Unseen, yet ever near,
 Gild with reflected ray thy heavenward road !
 Yet strive amid the noise
 Of earthly cares and joys
 To catch the far off harmonies of God !

34 STANZAS SUGGESTED BY A CONFIRMATION.

XII.

Earth is thy battle field ;
Therefore still humbly wield
All the keen weapons that thy Lord hath given ;
Heaven is thy destined prize ;
Therefore still keep thine eyes
Raised above earth to promised joys of Heaven !

XIII.

Cautious, yet hopeful too,
Should be Christ's faithful crew,
Tost on the billows "of this troublesome world ;"
'Mid wind and waters' night
Keeping the port in sight,
Where on the God-lit shore all sails are furled.

AN AUTUMN FANCY.

I.

THE golden drops of Autumn,
 How beautiful they be !
 Bright relics of the scattered wreath
 Of the discrownèd tree,
 As it lays its summer splendours down
 In calm humility.

II.

I call them drops of Autumn ;
 But methinks they mock the name ;
 For can it be decay can trace
 Such characters of flame ?
 But the seasons roll their wonted round —
 And all men say the same.

III.

I call them drops of Autumn ;
 But they rather seem akin
 To the tender tints of yellow green
 That usher spring-tide in ;
 So gaily float they on the edge,
 Dotting the dark within.

IV.

Bright golden drops of Autumn !
Fringing the old elm-tree ;
I love to tell to my own heart
How beautiful they be.
Though some will say " his praise is naught
For all that we can see."

V.

For as they gleam and quiver,
I cannot doubt that they
Will round into a fuller gold
In some other summer's day.
I cannot paint its glories —
I only dream, and pray.

VILLAGE BELLS.

(Written to Music. For School-children.)

I.

SWEETLY the Sabbath bell
 Steals on the ear,
 That in the House of Prayer
 Bids us appear.
 "Children of God," it seems
 Softly to say,
 "Haste to your Father's house,
 Hasten to pray!"

II.

Sadly the funeral bell
 Strikes on the heart,
 When from their earthly home
 Kind friends depart.
 How like a warning voice
 Sent from on high;
 "Like him for whom we toll
 Thou too must die!"

III.

Oft as the Sabbath chimes
 Summon to pray,
May we their holy call
 Gladly obey !
That when the last sad knell
 For us shall sound,
Ready to meet our Judge
 We may be found !

JONAH AND THE EMIGRANT.*

"If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." — Ps. cxxxix. 9, 10.

FAR from his heaven-appointed path
 The prophet turns to fly,
 Opposing to God's kindled wrath
 His human phantasy.

In vain — true Ocean knows the cause,
 With wiser instinct blest,
 And, to assert his monarch's laws,
 Uprears his foaming crest.

"Fling out, fling out your hard-won wares —"
 In vain — for still within
 The doomed offender lurks, and bears
 The plague-spot of his sin.

The lot is cast by human hands ;
 But God's all-present will
 Wild skirmishers of chance commands
 His purpose to fulfil.

* These lines, and the six first sonnets which follow, appeared in an occasional publication of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

"Cast out the self-condemned," they said,
"Into the vengeful sea ;
The doom be on the guilty head,
Our blameless bark be free !"

— Restored to earth, repentant, bowed
'Neath Heaven's far-reaching rod,
He warns yon city's startled crowd,
"'T is vain to flee from God."

Our ears, O Lord, have heard no voice,
No charge from Thee to roam ;
Yet trust in Thee has ruled our choice,
That leads us far from home.

Thy providence our path has crost
'Mid scenes of want and woe ;
We know Thou wouldst not have us lost —
And therefore we will go.

We trust in Thee our course to steer
Across the waters wide ;
The Christian has no cause to fear
Since Jesus walked the tide.

We trust that, wheresoe'er we go,
Thy mercy will not sleep ;
Thy way is on the sea, we know,
Thy path upon the deep !

The prophet trembles, and obeys
Thy present power — but we
Rejoice to feel Thy Spirit sways
The wild and boundless sea.

Guide us, O Lord, where'er we sail ;
Land us where'er Thou wilt ;
And grant, whene'er our hopes must fail,
It may not be from guilt.

THERE IS NO "TO-MORROW" FOR THE
CHRISTIAN.

To-morrow! — 't is a joyous sound,
In youth's glad hour, when hope is high,
To those who never yet have found
That hope's gay phantoms cheat the eye.

Then with To-morrow's magic name
Is linked full many a vision bright;
And high resolve and holy aim
Wait but its call to spring to light.

To-morrow — 't is a dreary word
To those who, worn on life's stern road,
Have felt the pang of "hope deferred,"
And sorrow's unabated load;

Who weep, by sad experience taught,
O'er youth's fair promise all o'ercast;
O'er holy aims, that came to nought;
And high resolves that could not last.

To them thy name, To-morrow, brings
New thoughts of grief, some untried care;
And memory, with her shadowy wings,
Forecasts e'en hope's horizon fair.

And men of old, whose vision dark
To pierce life's mystery strove in vain,
To fate resigned their wave-tost bark,
While loud arose the festive strain:

“Who knoweth what a day may bring?
So fraught with change our moments fly;
Come, let us eat and drink and sing!
To-morrow we may chance to die.”

And we, by Heaven-sent lessons taught
In every change our God to see —
With deeper, holier, wisdom fraught —
If earth were all, oh! what were we?

If earth were all, 't were sad to feel
That hope was false, and joy a dream;
The liveliest faith, the noblest zeal
Would sink o'erwhelmed in sorrow's stream.

No — to those realms our glance we cast,
Where hope and faith shall pass away;
No more of Future or of Past —
One present hour, one long To-day.

There, in the realms of heavenly rest,
Where never flows the tear of sorrow,
With God's eternal presence blest,
The Christian risen has no To-morrow!

44 NO TO-MORROW FOR THE CHRISTIAN.

And, while on earth we yet must stray,
Be ours, from earth's pollutions free,
To strive to do Thy will to-day,
And leave to-morrow, Lord, with Thee !

'T is thus, that trusting in Thy name,
E'en here, 'mid tears and change and sorrow,
His hope, e'en as his God, the same,
The Christian true has no To-morrow.

LINES WRITTEN DURING A HEAVY SHOWER
AFTER A LONG DROUGHT.

I.

EARTH, with every gaping vein,
Drinketh in the genial rain,
And her face looks bright again.

II.

Thankful for the freshening showers,
She repairs her faded bowers,
Putting forth new leaves and flowers.

III.

Flowers, that gleam with varied dyes —
Sweetest odours, thence arise
To the kindly-nursing skies.

IV.

Blessings, and refreshing love,
Showered on man from heaven above,
No return like this can move.

V.

On the dry and barren ground
Of a heart that sin has bound,
For them no resting-place is found.

VI.

Ceaselessly their task they ply,
And their gentlest influence try —
Still that heart is sear and dry !

VII.

Who shall melt the heart of stone,
That no softening power will own ?
God of mercy ! Thou alone.

VIII.

Though to human eye it be
Hopeless now to set it free,
All is possible with Thee.

IX.

Pour the riches of Thy grace
On the dry and barren place !
And it shall revive apace.

X.

Once again the heavenly seed
Shall bring forth, by mercy freed,
Holy thought, and virtuous deed.

"THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN."

"THERE is no room for you beneath our roof;
The house is full of guests — stand ye aloof!"
— Turned from the door the Virgin Mother mild,
And in the manger laid her spotless child.
The heart is full of folly, noise, and sin —
There is no room for Jesus in that Inn.
Go! seek some lowly out-house of the mind,
If there the Saviour you may chance to find.

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE SAGES.

HUMILITY drew Angels from afar.
High Contemplation only saw a Star.

A PARAPHRASE.

I.

MUSE on the lilies of the plain !
No toil nor painful care they know ;
They drink from heaven the genial rain,
And all unheedingly they grow.
Yet Solomon, in pride of power,
Was ne'er arrayed like yonder flower.

II.

Gaze on the birds that heavenward soar !
They sow not, neither do they reap ;
Nor gather into barns their store —
Yet them your Father deigns to keep.
He feedeth them from day to day —
And are not ye more dear than they ?

III.

The grass, so fresh and green to-day,
Yet withered ere to-morrow's morn —
The birds, through ether's pathless way,
On careless pinions idly borne —
Their Maker's care unceasing prove —
Oh ! faithless ye, to doubt his love !

TO A. M. B.

(A Sunday Sketch.)

Not for themselves so dear to me
 Those hazel eyes, so clear and bright;
 As that in them I seem to see
 An inner gleam of heavenly light.

Not for itself that placid brow,
 With nut-brown braids around it closing;
 As that I read, I know not how —
 Of truth and love within reposing.

And that sweet voice, an answer meet
 In measured gentleness returning,
 Speaks of a heart, in still retreat
 Deep pondering o'er its heaven-taught learning.

The voice, the looks, and, better still,
 The mind through these its beams diffusing,
 With thankful tears my eyes can fill
 Of love, and joy, and heaven-ward musing.

'T is not alone that thou art mine,
 But that oh! blessed child! in thee
 The God, whose graces in thee shine,
 Hath given Himself again to me!

100

SONNETS.



SONNETS ON EMIGRATION.

WHAT'S IN A PLACE ?

I.

"WHAT'S in a name? — the sweetness of the rose
 Might bear another name" — was asked of yore ;
 And baffled Reason studies to explore
 The feeling's mystery ; but she only knows
 That so it is ; and she can learn no more :
 And Instinct darts before with prompt reply —
 "A name *has* influence, and it boots not why" —
 While Reason's bark is stranded on the shore.
 What's in a place? Why should our native land,
 If elsewhere we can make us friends and live,
 Be dearer than the loveliest foreign strand?
 And the same answer Nature seems to give,
 "There *is* a magic in our native sky :
 Reason no more, but, if thou doubtest, try !"

II.

"How shall we here our country re-create ?
* The sluggish stream belies the borrowed name
Of Xanthus, and the altar's hallowed flame,
(The altar standing by the Scæan gate)
Was lighted from lost Ilium's ruined shrine.
'Tis thus we keep the charm of things divine,
And reproduce our land, in spite of fate."
Cold comfort this, and something out of date !
Why tell to time-worn men a schoolboy's tale ?
To life-worn men, borne sadly o'er the foam,
Far from the dear realities of home,
What can such shadows of the past avail ?
Victoria, Adelaide, and Oxford ! tell
Is all indeed a dream, is there no local spell ?

III.

There is a charm in place. The very seat,
Where first we sat, and listenéd wonderingly
To grave discourse or solemn litany,
Seems to our thought more reverend, and more meet
To wake devotion's heavenward harmony,
Than any shrine beneath the boundless sky.
Sweet local influence ! and strange as sweet !
Where is the man that would thy power defy ?
Not they who, borne in yon self-banished fleet
Seek a new land with half-adventurous mind,
Remorseful half for all they leave behind.
Oh ! for some signs of home their bark to greet !
And hark from yonder spire the bells reply,
"Here may ye find a home, for here am I."

* See Virg. *Æn.* iii. 350.

IV.

For not alone by local sentiment
Will we revive our country — which shall be
As England, Christian, and, as England, free —
Such the undaunted settler's resolute bent —
We take the flowers our Mother-land has lent,
(Not *given*, for that would seem to break the chain),
Tokens of home until we meet again,
And wreath them round the front of our intent —
Our high intent, to plant beyond the wave
A Saxon race, religious, patient, brave;
A race upon a two-fold mission sent
Beneath the banner of Him who died to save,
To build a name among the sons of earth,
And reach that better land, the home of our new birth.

AGAINST SECESSION TO ROME.

I.

WHY should we fly to Rome? why leave for her
 The difficult freedom of our purer faith?
 Is it to find a man that cannot err?
 Alas! such is not, Reason, Scripture, saith —
 Or is it that the tumult and the stir
 Of thoughtful zeal at strife offends our bent?
 Or is it that, with God no more content,
 Objects of faith we fain would multiply,
 And lean on other names beneath the sky
 Than His, our one High Priest Omnipotent?
 Or dream we baseless dreams of Unity?
 Ah! gorgeous wreck of unfulfilled intent!
 Come, simple trust in Him who died to save,
 And in a pardoning God beyond the grave.

II.

O Thou, who in Thy last known prayer, save those
 Which in Thy sufferings Thou didst heavenward send,
 (One for Thyself, the latest for Thy foes)
 Did'st pray for Unity — O Lord! and Friend!
 (If but in earnest we are following Thee,
 Or learning late to follow) — pity and lend
 Thy Spirit of light, that we may muse and see
 What mean Thy words, both "Truth" and "Unity" —

That so no lurid cloud may interpose
Of human pride still struggling to be free,
Nor stately Phantom, decked with specious shows
Of ordered faith and uniformity,
May on the weaker souls its yoke impose
Of those who cling to Truth, yet pray for Unity!

SONNETS ON THE DEATH OF THE LATE
DUKE OF WELLINGTON.*

I.

WE have not lost thee in thy glorious prime,
Strong-hearted hero of true English mould !
Nor with vex'd nations' rights to win or hold
In some convuls'd and peril-clouded time —
Nor 'mid the querulous yells of half-fledg'd crime
By folly led, fantastically bold.
'Mid peaceful days we watch'd thee growing old,
Veteran of duty, simple, yet sublime !
And thou hadst liv'd, yet not outlived, thy day.
And that no charm thy destiny could renew ;
That thou wast mortal like the rest — we knew.
And yet 't is strange to deem thee past away —
Oh ! brave in fight, in counsel wise and true,
A king of men through life, though crown'd at Waterloo !

* These sonnets appeared in the "Spectator" on the second Saturday after the death of the Duke of Wellington. I mention the date, as the expression "simple yet sublime" might, naturally enough, be thought to be borrowed from Mr. Tennyson's "Ode."

II.

With thee an age embodied slipp'd away,
A living image of th' eventful past.
What wonder that, with full eyes backward cast,
Once more we trace thy ever-brightening way,
And muse on all 'twas thine to do or say?
Oh! chief in blameless glory unsurpass'd,
A sun to cheer, no lightning flash to blast;
The tyrant's scourge, but law and order's stay,
And thy free country's wonder to the last!
Farewell — be ours to mourn thee as we may!
And while his grateful tears are falling fast,
Where thou shalt sleep, thy place right nobly won,
In yonder dome an Englishman may pray —
“God grant our land once more as great a son!”

III.

“God grant our land once more as great a son!
As self-forgetful in his country's cause,
True to her throne, her temples, and her laws,
As he who sleeps, his race of glory run,
'Mid the one voice of our prolong'd applause.”
“Oh! may we learn to do as he has done,
Self-bound like him, wherever duty draws —”
Such afterthought thy tomb may teach each one.
“England expects this day that every man
Will do his duty” — thus th' Enthusiast said —
And through each heart the shock electric ran.
Near his we lay thy grave time-honoured head.
Oh! spare of speech, twin glory of our land!
Thy seal is set on that august demand.

TO THE WEST-WIND.

(A Spring Sonnet.)

OH! sweet West-wind, oh! fresh with life and youth,
That bidst the parchèd wayside re-assume
Its constant green, and the pale flowerets bloom
That erst hung back, impatient of the tooth
Of the fell East, who blighted, as he pass'd,
Each vision of vernal beauty and perfume —
How fondly do we hail thee, come at last!
The clouds thou bringest no dark shadows cast;
Nor com'st thou sent, as bards were wont to sing,
From blustering cavern of some wild wind-king,
The rugged patron of each stormy blast —
Not such the rustling of thy delicate wing! —
But from some valley of God, some blest retreat,
The home of all sweet sounds and odours sweet!

A FEW LIGHTER PIECES.

THE EXCUSE.

I WANDERED by the tranquil sea,
When the waves were scarce in motion,
And scarce the breeze had power to raise
A ripple on the ocean.

The murmur of the calm blue sea,
The sky so bright above,
And the look serene of the beauteous scene
Inclined the heart to love.

And canst thou wonder then that I,
Forgetting all but thee,
Neglected the commission high
Thou gavest, sweet, to me?

How could I see the agate stone?
Or search for pebbles rare?
My heart was fixed on thee alone,
Each feeling centred there!

Then teach my heart to love thee less!
Though vain such task must be —
Or blame not my forgetfulness —
For oh! 't was caused by thee!

A PORTRAIT.

BEAUTIFUL is she when she smiles,
And beautiful in tears :
She has a thousand "simple wiles,"
And every one endears.

No tutored art could catch the spell
Her natural looks disclose ;
The painter might aspire as well
To match the living rose.

No flower that decks the sunny dale
Can with her charms compare ;
The lily in its native vale
Was never half so fair !

I will not say her eyes are bright,
Her hair of sunny hue,
Her face a mirror of delight
With portraits ever new —

Or that her form, by nature's hand,
Is decked with artless grace ;
The fairest form she ever planned
Joined to the sweetest face —

I only bid you gaze, and drink
Rich draughts of beauty there ;
And love-enlightened, smile to think
You e'er deemed others fair !

TO A LADY WHOSE BIRTHDAY IS IN MARCH.

LET the sunbeams lightly play,
Lady, on thy natal day !
Let the winds of March abate
Something of their stormy hate,
And a softer breeze prepare,
Meet to fan thy golden hair :
Breezes in those locks to play
Should be mild as sighs of May.
Let the rude sky wear the while
Something of a vernal smile ;
And, though flowers I may not bring
From the lingering stores of Spring,
Let my verse a garland be
Lady fair, to honour thee !

LOVE-SONG.

OH ! bid me not love *thee* no more !
Alas ! it may not be.
The wave that ebbs re-seeks the shore,—
And I must turn to thee.

And bid me not in others' smiles
Forget the gleam of thine !
No meteor blaze their eye beguiles
Who see the true sun shine.

Bid me my idle suit give o'er —
Say, thou wilt ne'er be won —
Bid me be wise and *hope* no more —
But let me still love on !

THE FADED GIFT.

THY flowers, alas ! are faded now ;
Their loveliness is past —
They were, like all things fair below,
Too beautiful to last.

Yet though this lovely wreath is dead,
And withered each bright stem ;
Though beauty, fragrance, all are fled —
Love fondly dwells on them.

For they can wake, those lifeless flowers,
The shades of brighter, happier hours ;
And paint anew to memory's eye
Past joys, and pleasures long gone by.

She, with her soft reviving breath,
Recalls each beauty past and gone ;
And clothes this wan and withered wreath
With bloom and fragrance not its own.

And sweeter far that scent to me,
And lovelier far that hue,
Than when, as yet untouched by thee,
They drank the morn's fresh dew.

And still, as in their beauty's hour
When from thy hand they came,
Still, still I love each faded flower, —
For thou art still the same.

FANCY AND REALITY.

WHEN, free from Love's delicious harms,
The fancied lover of a day,
I praised imaginary charms —
How quickly flowed the soft-toned lay !

But now, that of true love I speak,
I search in vain for words to tell
How fair is that transparent cheek,
Whose blushing hue I love so well.

And languid each resemblance seems,
Though culled from choicest stores of art,
To paint that eye's expressive gleams,
That strike and melt my inmost heart.

Then, since my verse no more has power
The feelings of my heart to prove,
Sweet, for the labour of an hour,
Say, wilt thou take a life of love ?

THE MODERN SIREN.

SHE played a wild and moving air.

And, as she played, she wept ;
And listlessly her fingers fair
Across the harp-strings swept.

She played a cadence soft and deep ;
And now and then she threw
A glance, that from their hopeless sleep
My withered feelings drew.

I thought not on my wasted youth,
And that I loved in vain —
She looked so like a form of truth —
She could not lie again !

I thought not on my deep despair —
'Twas strange I should forget
I only saw that she was fair ;
And that I loved her yet.

But ill betide the Siren's art !
And ill betide her lay ;
And those false smiles that lure the heart,
Then cast it, won, away.

TO A LADY PAYING A VISIT IN A COLD AND
LATE SPRING.

HAST thou come 'mid cold winds blowing?
Nature's face all bleak around;
While the late flowers scarce are showing
Their pale heads above the ground.

Yet, methinks, thy presence, dearest,
Must the darkest scene illumine;
And wherever thou appearest
Trees must bud, and flowerets bloom.

And the frown Heaven's brow o'er-shading
At thy smile must melt ere long;
And, each other's sloth upbraiding,
Birds awake a cheerful song.

But, if, all our hopes eluding
Spring her coming still delay;
Still the wintry blasts intruding
Claim to share the April day —

Though the scene be bleak around us,
Flowerless mead and leafless tree —
Still the heart's spring shall surround us;
And its hours be timed by thee.

"THEY SEEMED UNTO HIM BUT A FEW DAYS,
FOR THE LOVE HE HAD TO HER."

(Gen. xxix. 20.)

BLEST words! whose import, pure and sweet,
To constant hearts full well is known;
Like rest to way-worn wanderer's feet,
Falls on the ear your soothing tone.

How oft, when weary and distressed
We faint upon life's toilsome way,
Far from the smile we love the best,
That makes the dullest scene seem gay,

Gladly we woo the potent spell
That Love and Hope together wind;
Our thoughts amid the future dwell,
And leave the present far behind.

No more we blame the lingering hours —
No more the path all dreary seems;
Hope sheds around her fairest flowers;
And Love his brightest, sunniest beams.

Hope brings before our raptured eye
The prospect distant far away;
And bids it seem for ever nigh,
Nigher and brighter every day.

And still the dear delusion lasts,
Though many a day may come and go ;
And still that light, though distant, casts
On present scenes its cheering glow.

And oft, when present griefs oppress,
And present cares our soul annoy,
Hope sends from far, our way to bless,
A foretaste sweet of future joy.

All clouds and mists away she clears
From love's half-doubting, anxious eye ;
And bids the long and lingering years
Like a few short-lived days pass by.

THE END.





